

17.
The Nature of a true Zeal
Consider'd with a View to the present Design of collating
the Hebrew Manuscripts.

IN A
VISITATION SERMON,
Preached at the Appointment
OF THE
Right Reverend Father in GOD,
T H O M A S,
LORD BISHOP of *NORWICH*,
IN THE
CATHEDRAL CHURCH of *NORWICH*,
August, 19, 1760.
And to the CLERGY of the Archdeaconry of *Suffolk*.

By *HENRY GOODALL*, D.D.
Archdeacon of *SUFFOLK*, and Prebendary of *NORWICH*.

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[Price Sixpence]

TO

The Right Reverend Father in God,

T H O M A S,

LORD BISHOP of *NORWICH*,

The following S E R M O N

Is very respectfully and with all Humility

D E D I C A T E D,

B Y

His L O R D S H I P ' S

Most dutifull,

Most obliged,

And most faithfull Servant,

HENRY GOODALL.

TO

The Right Reverend Father M. O. O.

T H O M A S

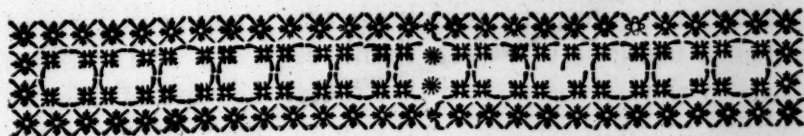
LORD MANTON

The Right Reverend



and John J. J.

HENRY GOODALL



J U D E, Verse 3d.

Belovéd, when I gave all Diligence to write unto You of the common Salvation, it was needful for me to write unto You, and exhort You, that Ye shou'd earnestly contend for the Faith, which was once deliver'd to the Saints.

A
 Zeal for religion is so commendable in itself, and of such public use in promoting the cause of piety and virtue, that, when it is founded upon solid and rational principles, directed to its proper object, and carried on in a way that does honour to God, by advancing the welfare and happiness of men, it is abundantly entitled to the highest encomium that can be passed upon it; because it puts mankind on an active and vigorous pursuit of every laudable purpose, and kindles that ardour in their breasts, which is necessary to carry them to the completion of it. For such is the nature and constitution of man, so compounded in its frame, and made up of such discordant and jarring elements; that a close attention to his wants and infirmities, to the calls of appetite, and to the cares and concerns of his bodily

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dily state, draws him off from the nobler pursuits of virtue and goodness, which are the genuine dictates of a mind unbiassed by such selfish regards; and confines him to that narrow and contracted scheme of life, in which his own interests and engagements have a principal share. This being the case: to guard against any undue influence, which our desires may have upon us, in clogging the wheels of action, and retarding our progress in all moral improvement; it is necessary that the weight, which is thus hung upon our minds, should have something to balance it, and take off that reluctance, which must needs be given, by these natural propensities, to every generous endeavour for the public welfare. Now nothing is so likely to open and enlarge our views, to rouse the faculties of our souls, and to interest our passions and desires in the common good and happiness of mankind, as Religion: which places morality on its proper basis, discovers the fitness and propriety of it, and gives a sanction to its precepts, that justifies our warmest endeavours in the pursuit and attainment of all christian perfection. But this must be supposed to be said, as indeed it can be only true, of such a zeal as is founded in knowledge; that hath truth for its basis, and extends not itself beyond such a practice, as is reducible to its first and original principles: for when once it is permitted to pass this line and measure of our duty, as it loses its proper support, so are we lost in an endless maze and labyrinth of error, without clue to guide, or monitor to curb and restrain our wanderings. Hence fancy and opinion, convenience or interest will readily usurp the seat of sober judgment, and our lives will be tinctured with those prevailing prejudices, that happen to strike

strike us and make the deepest impression on our minds.

But this is not the worst of a false and mistaken zeal, that it leaves men open and exposed to every assault that can be made upon their virtue, and may contribute to lessen the force of moral duty; it substitutes in the room of it such fatal delusions, as undermine and pervert its influence; and, by gilding them over with some specious name, that is likely to impress men with an awe and reverence for them, it bears down all opposition to them, and urges an implicit compliance with them, from the weight of that authority which it presumes to come with. Its high pretensions are the will and command of God, and who, that can bring himself to think these pretensions just, will dare to withhold his obedience to them, or listen to any remonstrance, that may chance to divert him from the pursuit of so glorious an end? How far a misguided zeal may carry men, the great Apostle of the Gentiles was himself a memorable instance; who, from his own confession, was driven, by its heat and violence, into every cruel measure, that was taken to stop the progress of the Gospel, and persecuted even to death the preachers and publishers of it: and what complicated mischiefs have since arisen from the self same cause, may be seen in the annals of the Roman and Mahometan churches, which abound in examples of the dreadful effects of superstition and bigotry.

Seeing then, that we stand in such necessity, on the one hand, of the aid of religion, to forward our endeavours in the cause of virtue; and are expos'd to so much danger, on the other, of being carried away, by some specious pretensions to it, from that benevolence

and love, which are intimately connected with it, and the only true grounds and principles on which it can be supposed to rest: I hope, it will not be thought foreign to the Apostle's intention in the words before us, or any abuse of the solemn occasion on which we are met, if I bespeak your attention to the following reflections upon them.

He addresses them to the Christian converts of the times in which he wrote, and urges the necessity of this pathetic exhortation from the dangerous corruptions which were creeping in among them, to the scandal of the Gospel, and the grief of good men, who were truly zealous for its honour and credit, *Beloved*, says He, *when I gave*, or whilst I was using *all diligence to write unto You, of the common Salvation*, to instruct you in it and explain more fully the duties and doctrines of it, *it was needfull*, or I found a pressing occasion *for me to write unto You, and exhort You, that Ye should earnestly contend for the faith, which was once delivered to the Saints*. The occasion he speaks of, was from men of perverse and carnal minds, who had corrupted the doctrines and precepts of the Gospel, *turning the grace of God into lasciviousness, and denying the only Lord God and our Saviour Jesus Christ*; and to obviate the dangers that this occasion administer'd, He exhorts them to *contend earnestly for the faith, which was once delivered to the Saints*. The reflections, that naturally arise out of the words which we have now before us, for the subject of our present meditation, are

FIRST: that a zeal for religion, if it be grounded on solid and rational principles, is not only to be justified but insisted on, as a necessary duty to recommend

us to the favour of God: it is what the Apostle presses on his Christian converts, to *contend earnestly for the faith.*

SECONDLY: that the caution, to be used, is not in the measure, but the object of our zeal: it must be *for the faith which was once delivered to the Saints.*

And LASTLY: that, if we contend for nothing more, than what the Gospel, in its first and original state, required of its followers to maintain; the manner of expressing this zeal will always be such, as will best consist with the rules and precepts it prescribes us for the government of our conduct.

And first, of the expediency of a zeal for religion: now, as this is a part of our behaviour, that relates to the honour and worship of God, so the attention, we pay to it, should bear some proportion to the greatness of the object about which it is employed; and our concern, for its credit and support, keep pace with the constant and continual obligations we are under to advance and promote its interest. The precarious and dependant State, we are in, calls loudly upon us to acknowledge this dependance, in our daily prayers and petitions to God for the supply of our wants. The bounty, which gave us our being at the first, and by which it has been all along preserved, demands of us the repeated tribute of a gratefull mind; and the grace and pardon afforded us in the gospel of his Son, together with the hope of life and immortality, which He hath opened to us by Him, do still more strongly bind us to his service and worship, by every argument and consideration, that can raise our gratitude to the merciful author and giver of them. And will not such various and powerfull inducements be sufficient
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to move and stir up our affections to the love of God? nay! will they not put us on an active and vigorous promotion of his honour, by every outward expression of our reverence for him, by the weight of our example, and by the influence which our several stations respectively enable us to have in the advancement of his glory? for, how can it indeed be otherwise? will not the same reasons, that operate so powerfully on the minds of men, in their behaviour to one another, be equally strong in producing the like effects, with regard to the duties which we owe to God? it is from the near resemblance of that filial duty which we owe to our earthly parents, and of the reverence which we owe to God, as our spiritual father, that the Romans included them both under the name of piety. The love and gratitude, which are due to men, for favours and benefits conferred upon us by them, become still more eminently due to God, who is the ablest friend and benefactor we have; and from the bounty of whose good providence it is, that they have it in their power to assist us, or we to receive the benefit of their friendly offices. And that universal love and good will to all mankind, which is the highest summit of perfection to which human nature can be carried, and affords the largest scope for a full exertion of our mental and bodily powers in the exercise of it; as it is founded in the nature of God, *whose mercy is over all his works*, so does it derive a peculiar enforcement from a punctual performance of the duties of religion, which can be no farther looked upon as genuine, than as it bears this mark and character of its divine origin. And therefore every generous principle, by which we are moved to succour the distressed
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and prosecute the happiness of our fellow-creatures, must equally warm and animate our endeavours in the cause of God and of religion, as the common good and happiness of mankind is equally the object of them both.

That God expects such an outward proof of our zeal and affection towards him, may be farther confirmed from his own declaration concerning it: for *them that honour me*, saith God, *I will honour*. And again, from the appeal which He is pleas'd to make to natural and civil duties, as arguments of that outward reverence which is due to himself: *a son honoureth his father*, saith God, *and a servant his master: if I then be your father, where is mine honour? and if I be your master, where is my fear?* let me add, that the history of God's providence abounds in examples of the favours, that were shewn, to men eminent for their piety, on these outward expressions of their zeal and duty. Thus David was distinguished as the man after God's *own heart*, because he had given many early proofs of a zeal for his service; and that the eminent distinction, which was paid to Abraham, was on this very account, we have on the authority of God himself; *for I know him*, saith God, *that he will command his children and his household after him, to serve the Lord*.

My second reflection on the words of the text, which I proposed to make good, is this: that the only caution, to be used, in the management of our zeal, is not in the measure, but the object of it; it must be *for the faith which was once delivered to the Saints*, to those *holy men of God*, who had it in commission to publish this faith to the world. Here indeed it be-
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hoves us, to be circumspect and cautious, that we be not impos'd upon, and, with the laudable temper and spirit of the Bereans, *to search and examine the Scriptures whether these things are so*: for whatever comes not thus authenticated by the word of God, wants that evidence which alone can prove it to be his will; and any failure or mistake, in so capital a point, instead of commending us to the favour of God, must needs expose us to the charge of rashness and presumption, in building our faith on a ground so questionable.

That we may not too hastily take up, or too rashly maintain the opinions of weak and fallible men, for the oracles of God; the Apostle, at the same time that he urges a becoming warmth, in the defence of our holy religion, confines it to its proper object; the distinguishing of which is not the effect of warmth, but the result of a cool and dispassionate enquiry. And in truth, whoever well considers the importance of what he is seeking after, will of course be put upon his guard, that he be not misguided in these his researches, by giving too close an attention to the flattering hopes which his own passions and prejudices are but too apt to inspire, or paying too great a deference to the opinion of other men, whose interest or ambition it may be to take advantage of this his credulity, and advance themselves by it into leaders of sects and parties.

To avoid the danger of imbibing any such impure mixtures, for the clear waters of salvation, we must go to the fountain head. The streams that flow from thence, it is true, may be adulterated in their way to us, by the foulness of the channels through which they pass; but if we dive into the wells and cisterns
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for them, where they were first lodged, we shall then take them in their genuine and primitive purity. The church of Christ *was built on the foundation of the Apostles and Prophets: other foundation can no man lay, nor an Angel from heaven preach any other doctrine.* The superstructure, raised upon this foundation, must be commensurate to the first design; if it stretches out beyond it, so far as it does so, it will not only be void of support itself, but may help to pull down what, without this additional incumbrance, had whereon to stand. That the christian fabrick therefore may not be endanger'd by such appendages, as have no essential connection with it, or perhaps threaten its overthrow, we must trace it to its first beginnings: what was then laid down, as the measure of our faith, must ever continue to be the rule and standard of it.

But here perhaps it may be objected: that we cannot now determine what that standard is, with any exactness and precision, as we have no rule to go by which we can be sure of: that however well it might be known what men were to believe, when the preachers of the Gospel were empower'd to declare and publish it to the world, the faith of a christian stands at present upon quite a different bottom, and the evidence for it is render'd precarious and doubtful by the method in which it is conveyed: that tradition, whether oral or written, is still liable to the mistakes of hasty, or the corruptions of artfull and designing men; and that whatever preference we may give to the latter, we can have no absolute security of either, or assuredly know what it was, which, in fact, was at first delivered as the object of our faith; since this may possibly have been changed upon us, and that it has been so changed, may be

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thought perhaps no unreasonable supposition, as it cannot now be authenticated by the original vouchers, which are long ago perished; and the transcripts, that remain, are found to differ so widely from one another, that no two copies are alike throughout.

Now this, it must be own'd, is a difficulty that well deserves to be consider'd; but when it has been examined will, I make no doubt, appear incapable of affording any subterfuge for infidels to flee to, and escape that conviction they are so industrious to shun. For what if authenticity cannot be pleaded for every word and letter of our Bibles, because the manuscripts, from which they are printed, are found to differ? we see, this difference notwithstanding, a wonderfull agreement between them in the capital articles of our faith; and these come over so often, and are, besides, so frequently quoted by the antient writers of the christian church, that we may be morally sure they are none of them sunk upon us, or corrupted from their pure and genuine simplicity. In points of less importance indeed, that occur not so frequently, and perhaps pass unnoticed by other writers, it must be confessed that they differ more: and what wonder if they do, from the inattention and mistakes of copyers? the inconvenience however, that might otherwise follow from these human imperfections, is in a good measure prevented, by the multiplicity of copies that were produced by them; for they not only confirm where they read alike, but their various readings, in proportion to the number of them, afford us a greater probability of coming at a true and genuine text.

It is for this reason, that great pains have been taken in collecting and collating the manuscripts of the *new* Testament,

Testament, as the likeliest method, by comparing them together, of finding out their several mistakes. And though little or nothing of this sort has been done, with regard to the *old*, from a prevailing notion too implicitly credited and too long persisted in, that the manuscripts of it are so few in number, and, by the scrupulous exactness that was used in transcribing it, so nearly alike, that no very usefull purpose cou'd have been answered by it; yet has it been shewn, by a learned member of one of our Universities, in an accurate and judicious performance which he has lately published, that these manuscripts are much more numerous than they were apprehended to be, and that this pretended agreement between them has upon enquiry nothing to support it; that the manuscripts, at home and abroad, which he has been able to come at an account of, are considerably above four hundred; and that the *variations* of those he has met with, in a single psalm, are more than fifty; which swell, when compared with the same psalm in Samuel, to above six hundred. To collate such a number of manuscripts, which are, many of them, in very distant countries, must be attended with a great deal of trouble and a large expence: but the Design is a noble one, and as so able a hand has already made some progress in it, it is much to be wish'd that the countenance, he has met with, may invite many others to set their shoulders to the work, and contribute their generous assistance to put it in execution.

Of the great use and advantage of so important an undertaking, in correcting the present text of our Bibles, and clearing up many passages in them, which owe their present obscurity to the errors and mistakes of copyists,

little doubt can be made. Yet as some dislike was expressed at a former work of this kind, and the tendency of it was thought to be bad, in unhinging the minds of men, and filling them with doubts and jealousies of the whole, from the liberty thus taken with particular parts: to obviate such unfavourable surmises, let us try their weight by what experience has taught us of prophane authors. Are they the worse, or the better for these helps? is it not true in fact, that where these cou'd not be had, or, from a scarcity of manuscripts, cou'd be come at only in a less degree, a proportional obscurity has prevailed in their writings? and is obscurity any mark of their being genuine? or are we not rather to suppose, that the same advantages, which others had, wou'd have restored these likewise to their first and original purity? that a single copy should escape without errors, is hardly to be imagined; but a multitude of them, however they may all be supposed to differ, will correct one another, and give us a very fair chance of coming at a true one; and so far from throwing any dark and gloomy suspicions on the whole, the light, afforded by these discoveries, will go a good way in detecting the errors that remain.

All scripture indeed was given at the first by inspiration of God, but it is handed down to us by human and fallible means, and must be liable to the accidents that happen to other writings; which as the wisdom of providence thought not good to prevent, it is the more incumbent upon us to endeavour to remove the errors and corruptions occasion'd by them. For no one can believe it to be the will of God, that the same reverence should be paid to the blunders and mistakes of copyists, as to his sacred and infallible word. Besides that,

that, the present text of our Bibles must itself have been settled either by a preference given to one particular manuscript, before all others that were extant, or, as was in truth the case, by the choice of one particular reading out of the many that offer'd from different manuscripts. But a text thus determined by human skill, how great soever that skill might be, could not be more perfect than the manuscripts which they had to found it upon; and if there are any other which they had not in their power, or neglected to consult, however we might trust to their judgment and integrity in chusing the best, we cannot be sure that a better was not to be found. Nay let us suppose them even to have had, and to have used every possible advantage of materials, judgment, and integrity; it is still building our faith upon human authority, which is ever fallible and liable to error: it is an implicit faith that is due alone to the oracles of God, which are known to be so, and for the truth of which, we are not to depend on the opinion of others, when we may have the same or better means of judging than they were possess'd of.

Some scrupulous minds, it is true, have been strongly affected with jealousies and fears of the hurt that may be done to religion, by moving any questions about it, whatever cause there may be for such enquiry, and however promising the method may be in which it is pursued; from a tendency that this may have to shake and unsettle mens minds in points more essential. Now were this to be the case, it might well deserve our particular attention, and any danger of its being so, wou'd be a reason for suppressing them: but the detection of error can never disserve the cause of truth. It is the
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the blending them together without distinction, and maintaining them both with equal firmness, that takes from the reverence due to the latter, and exposes it to the scoff and ridicule of licentious tongues. And therefore we cannot do greater honour to the faith we have embraced, than by our readiness to have it examined by all the rules of tryal, that are consistent with a fair and candid hearing. If there be any thing in it, that will not stand the test of such an open and impartial search; the discovery of it, instead of weakening our faith, will but confirm it the more in points that appear to have a surer basis. A belief, that shuns examination, is not such a one as the Gospel encourages; which enjoins us to take nothing upon trust, but to *prove all things: to examine ourselve whether we be in the faith*; and to be furnished with *reasons for the hope that is in us*: lest, while we are contending for what is commonly held to be the genuine doctrine of inspired teachers, we be in fact found to be fighting against God; and where the issue of our enquiry is of such weighty consequence, it behoves us, that the steps we take in it be upon very sure ground; and that for this purpose we avail ourselves of every advantage, for informing our judgments, which fairly presents itself; that we lay aside every prejudice, and leave our minds free and open to conviction. A zeal, thus founded on the best evidence that offers, that proceeds from a just reverence for the will and command of God, and suffers itself to be directed by such informations and notices, as appear to have the greater weight in determining the rule and measure of our faith, bids the fairest for carrying us to the true object of it, *the faith which was once delivered to the saints.*

THIRDLY:

THIRDLY: a zeal, that flows from so good a principle, and in its growth and progress is directed to no other purpose, than what is here laid down as its end and view, is as little liable to err, in the manner and measure in which it is expressed, as to mistake the object about which it is to be employed. For as it takes its rise from a love of God, and an earnest desire to obey what appears, on the best information we can get, to be his will; so is it very likely to keep itself within such reasonable bounds, that no man may have cause to complain of, or to take any umbrage and offence at the warmth with which it is expressed; force and violence had so little hand in producing it, that any attempt to make use of them must be looked upon with a just abhorrence and indignation: the same liberty of judgment and freedom of enquiry, by a due use of which we ourselves arrived at the knowledge of God, the informations and notices he has given us of himself, and the declarations he has made, of his will to mankind, will naturally check any intemperate sallies of our zeal for matters of opinion; and dispose us rather, to treat men with a gentleness and candour, that may win them to listen to the weight of our arguments, than to drive and force them to acknowledge what they have no assurance to support, and what, for want of this assurance, can never be the object of their faith and hope.

The more indeed we know of the grounds of our faith, as we shall be the better confirmed in it; so our zeal, for its establishment in the minds of men, will be proportionably greater: but then, its operations will of course be similar to its birth and origin; and the method it pursues, to bring men over to the same professions in matters of belief and doctrine, will be such as
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may best consist with the liberty taken in fixing and settling our own opinions, with the free use of their understandings, and of every help to inform them which opportunity throws in their way. He, that has thus learned Christ, will easily and readily discern, that though to be zealously affected in a good cause be always good, and the cause of God is most certainly such a one, yet it behoves us to be sure, that the cause in which we are engaged is his; that what we contend for is founded upon his authority, is nothing more than what we are bound to maintain by his express command; and that the means, by which it is enforced, be such as are agreeable to those general rules and measures of practice, which are every where laid down for the government of our conduct in his sacred word. He will easily see, that tho' it concerns him to be diligent to spread the knowledge of this, to promote, as far as he can, an universal obedience to it, and, by every lawfull method, to discountenance any open and notorious violations of it: yet we must not *do evil, that good may come of it*; we must not so *preach Christ*, as to make his religion a matter of *strife* and *contention* amongst us, who came to teach it in the *spirit of meekness*, and condescended to bear with the prepossessions of mankind against it, that he might thereby obtain a more effectual way to convince their understandings. For he well knew that to combat with the passions of men, in a direct and open manner, is but to rouse a sleeping enemy, to call the *craftsmen* about us, and raise an outcry, as if we meant to wrest out of their hands the means of their subsistence, and to deprive them of every hope, which they had formed to themselves, from so gainfull an employment. But if we hold
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up the truth to mens minds in all its native simplicity, till they are struck with the beauty of it, and see the fair advantages with which it is ever attended; the cloud, of prejudice will of course disperse itself, and each dark suspicion of design against them disappear and vanish, as unable to withstand the light of its conviction.

To lay hold of the passions of men, and, by the flattering indulgence which is paid to them, to warp their judgments, is the business of error; and such an application is the surest way that can be taken to pervert them to its purpose. Because when they are once engaged in its favour, it is easy to give such a semblance and colouring to it, as may make it pass without suspicion of guile in the dressers of it; and it is no hard matter to make men eager to embrace, what so readily falls within the bent and byas of their inclinations. But to draw them off from any false pursuits, and give them a direction that may make them serviceable in the cause of truth, the mind must first be satisfied, and the understanding convinced, before any progress can be made in bringing them over to engage in its defence. Disposed as they are to yield to every thing, that has the most distant tendency to sooth and flatter them, it is in vain to think of making any impression upon them, or to expect any fair decision, upon points where their interest is at all concerned; but upon such conviction of the mind, as will enable it to withstand their utmost efforts, by the light that is thus let in upon it, and the sure stability that is thereby given to all its resolutions.

Hence a zeal for religion, such a one as is here described, can never be in danger of exceeding in its
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measure, as the object, to which it is referr'd, will be sure to keep it within it's proper bounds. Contend we must, and that with earnestness, with such a warmth as may convince men, that we are cordially moved and affected with it; that we have a true sense of its weight and importance, and mean to defend it by every method, which may serve to advance it's cause. Yet not with heat and vehemence, with such an eagerness as bears down all before it, confounds the rights of civil liberty, and will not suffer itself to be restrained, by the natural claim that every man has to examine its pretensions. Such a zeal as this may make men hypocrites, and force them upon mean compliances, which in themselves they cannot but abhor: but can do religion no credit, nor gain it a single friend. Such violent measures may be well enough calculated to serve the base designs of artfull politicians, and establish that absolute rule over the minds of men, which ambition aims at; but can, by no art or colouring, be brought to agree, with what is here laid down as the pattern of our faith. The rule itself at once describes the nature of our zeal, and marks out the bounds, beyond which we must not presume to carry it. What was once delivered to the Saints, to men commission'd by God to declare his Gospel, we may, we must adhere to. We cannot go farther, nor fall short of any thing which comes within this compass. No refinements of our own, nor decisions of others, nor declarations of the church, however far back they may be traced in its annals, can have any authority to challenge our belief, any farther than as these are warranted by what was originally taught by them.

Hence it follows, that as we cannot believe ourselves,
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without good and sure ground, that what we believe was once thus delivered; so neither can we be justified in taking any other steps to bring men over to our own persuasions, than what may well agree with the free use of their understandings, and such a liberty of judgment, as is only to be had by a fair and open enquiry. For without such enquiry, the faith, they profess, will not be that, which is here required of them to maintain; as it stands not on the same divine authority, at most can be only presumed to do so, and this upon an evidence that is weak and fallible, the opinion of weak and fallible men. If it be said, that this is oftentimes better than their own, it may be so: but if the judgment of its weight and strength belongs not to them, they are equally unconcerned in the faith that is built upon such an evidence. If nothing more is expected from men, to be believed by them, than what is founded on the testimony of Moses and the Prophets, of Christ and his Apostles; that so much is required, is because they have given such evidence for what they taught, and such ample proof of their divine discourses and the genuineness of them is come down to us, as is sufficient to convince us that the doctrine they contain is God's. And therefore for men to be any farther concerned, than in searching out the word of God and bringing it to light, in expounding its meaning and explaining the evidence on which it stands, and in urging the motives it offers to a good and holy life, is not to contend for the faith which was once delivered to the saints; but for such doctrines and practices, as are the genuine offspring of craft and design, or superstition and bigotry; for conjectures of their own, or the fancies and opinions of mere men like themselves.

I shall detain you no longer, than to make a short application of what has been said; and shew the danger of departing from that authority for the christian faith, to which alone it is here confined, in two particular instances.

The Romanists rest the merits of their separation from us, on the authority of their church; and charge us with leaving them, because we refused to be longer held in the bonds of that superstition, which had nothing better to support it, than an implicit faith in its public decisions; on points where these decisions very evidently clashed with the word of God, and perverted their worship to the foulest and grossest idolatries. But whether such a charge upon us has any good foundation, let the Apostle determine; for if what was once delivered to the first preachers and publishers of the Gospel, be the faith that we are to contend for; then the authority of their church, whatever its boasted antiquity may be, can have little weight in determining the bounds, or prescribing the measure of it. For after all, it must be found in those written records, which they have left behind them: and every thing else, which has not their sanction, must be rejected by us, whatever quarter it comes from.

And secondly: those Schismatics among us, who affect to be moved by an inward call to separate from us, and put off the spurious issues of their heated fancies, for the pure and genuine dictates of the spirit of God, might be easily satisfied of the boldness and arrogance of such high pretensions; would they soberly consider, that whatever those feelings are which they so much boast of, and that presumptuous confidence of their spiritual state, which is grounded
upon

upon them; they are not to be trusted to, without a due tryal of them by the word of God. For how else can they be sure, that these powerfull perswasions are the dictates of his spirit? it may be said perhaps, and it being their only refuge, they are in no wise backward to lay hold of it, that this is a matter which wants no proof, nor is it indeed capable of any. What they feel themselves cannot be conveyed to others, and an inward conscioufness that they are so affected, is of itself sufficient for their own conviction. But are they so little acquainted with human nature as to want to be told, that, of all things in the world, there is nothing so deceitfull as the heart of man? and that to be guarded against its delusions, requires more caution than any other fraud which can be passed upon them. Or are they such strangers to their Bibles, as never to have learned from them, that to be born of the spirit is not to be distinguish'd by any inward feelings, but by *the fruits it produceth?* such a perswasion as this then can never be safely trusted to, on any security they can have from themselves, but must be gradually wrought in them by a practical obedience to the laws of God, and a stedfast adherence to that *faith* alone, *which was once delivered to the Saints.*

F I N I S,

upon them: for a man of this kind of character
one that is full of the love of God, and
this can only be true, if the man is a
man of this kind of character, and
and it being the only way of
backwards to the point of
wants no more of the world, and
the world is a place of
and it is a place of
to be told, that of all things in the world
nothing is so difficult as to be a man of
to be a man of this kind of character, and
then any other kind of character, and
Or are they such things as to be a man of
have learned from them, and to be a man of
is not to be distinguished by any kind of
the spirit of the world, and to be a man of
can never be truly right, or on any kind of
have from themselves, and to be a man of
in them by a practical obedience to the law of God,
and a faithful adherence to that law, and
ever delivered to the world.

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